

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) An instrument for distracting an intervertebral space, the instrument comprising:

a plying device having an actuation handle, an intermediate portion and a first longitudinal axis extending through a center of said actuation handle toward said intermediate portion, said plying device further having a distraction end extending outwardly from said intermediate portion, wherein said distraction end includes —two opposing fork-shaped extensions extending from said intermediate portion of said plying device, each of said —fork-shaped extensions including a base, two tines extending outwardly from said base, and a second longitudinal axis parallel to said two tines and centered between said two tines, wherein said second longitudinal axis is off-set from said first longitudinal axis, and

wherein said base includes a forward ridge portion perpendicular to an outwardly facing surface of the tines such that said forward ridge portion forms a vertebral body stop as said instrument is inserted into an intervertebral space, and

wherein said fork-shaped extensions, each including an interior side having a notch and a curved profile, said interior sides facing each other and, comprising a contoursuch that said curved profile of said interior sides are adapted to releasably grasp therebetween an artificial intervertebral disc, and said notches of said interior sides are adapted to accommodate a vertebral body stop of a disc manipulation instrument, and

wherein actuation of said plying device causes said two opposing fork-shaped extensions to move between an open position and a closed position, said opposing fork-shaped extensions are in parallel planes in said open and closed positions.

2. (cancelled)

3. (previously presented) The instrument according to claim 1, said fork-shaped extensions further comprising an elongated section oriented substantially perpendicular to the base.

4. (original) The instrument according to claim 3 wherein one of said tines is longitudinally aligned with the elongated section.

5-8. (cancelled)

9. (original) The instrument according to claim 1 said fork-shaped extensions having exterior sides, said exterior sides comprising vertebral endplate contacting surfaces which, in response to pressure applied to said plying device, distract said intervertebral space.

10. (original) The instrument according to claim 1, said interior sides comprising at least one curved facing profile defining an opening dimensioned to permit an intervertebral disc having at least one exterior curved contour to be positioned between the fork-shaped extensions.

11. (previously presented) The instrument according to claim 1, wherein said plying device comprising a plying device having at least two hinges.

12. (previously presented) The instrument according to claim 1 wherein said fork-shaped extensions are releasably detachable from said intermediate portion of said plying device.

13-15. (cancelled)

16. (currently amended) A system comprising:

an instrument including an actuation handle having a proximal end, a distal end, and a longitudinal axis extending therethrough, said instrument further including opposing fork-shaped extensions ~~extending~~ releasably detachable from said ~~proximal end to said distal end of said~~ actuation handle, said fork-shaped extensions having interior sides facing each other, the interior sides having a notch and a curved profile, said interior sides facing each other such that said curved profile of said interior sides forming a passage dimensioned to accommodate the passage of an artificial intervertebral disc and said notches of said interior sides are adapted to accommodate a vertebral body stop of a disc manipulation instrument, wherein each of said fork-shaped extensions further including a base, two tines extending outwardly from said base, and a second longitudinal axis centered between said two tines, wherein said second longitudinal axis is off-set and parallel to said first longitudinal axis, wherein said base includes a forward ridge portion perpendicular to an outwardly facing surface of the tines such that said forward ridge portion forms a vertebral body stop as said instrument is inserted into an intervertebral space;

at least one artificial intervertebral disc having an upper baseplate and a lower baseplate; and

wherein the fork-shaped extensions of said instrument are adapted to engage the upper and lower baseplates of said disc, and wherein actuation of said plying device causes said two opposing fork-shaped extensions to move between an open position and a closed position, said opposing fork-shaped extensions are in parallel planes in said open and closed positions.

17. (previously presented) The system according to claim 16, said baseplates further comprising a centrally disposed dome and teeth disposed apart from said dome, forming a space, and said tines of said fork-shaped extensions are dimensioned to fit into said spaces for grasping said disc.

18. (cancelled).